

EXHIBIT 28



AUG 2, 2024 • 28 MIN READ • UTAH STATE FOOTBALL

Transcript: Everything Said By Diana Sabau And Nate Dreiling At USU Media Day

As promised, here's the full transcript (nearly 8,000 words worth) of everything said by Diana Sabau and Nate Dreiling at yesterday's media day press conference, free for all to read:



Utah State athletic director Diana Sabau and interim head football coach Nate Dreiling addressed local media at a press conference on Aug. 1, the opening day of fall camp for Dreiling's Aggies. What follows is a complete transcript of their sessions, edited only for clarity and readability.

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Opening Statement

"Thank all of you for coming to Cache Valley today, we appreciate your support and are overjoyed with excitement to start our 2024 football season with the first day of fall camp today. I come to you with a profound sense of gratitude for how much Aggie Nation and our community have been supportive of these last weeks and days. As you know, we've gone through some hard days with our football program – a period of transition, and the untimely passing of Andre Seldon.

"We are ready to move forward, and today is a big step in that process. Our football young men have worked extremely hard this summer with Paul Jackson and his staff, and they're ready to take it to the next level as camp starts today. We are ready, and I'm excited to move forward and to start a new season under the leadership of our interim head coach, Nate Dreiling.

"I'm sure you've all made yourselves familiar with Nate's coaching journey, his success as a collegiate athlete, and his rise through the ranks in his various stops along the way. We're proud to have him as our interim head coach and very proud of our staff, which has pulled together and united behind. They have a plan, they have a scheme, and they have a system that they're ready to execute. We know it will be executed with some adversity, but our young men believe, and so, why doesn't everybody? Why not USU this year?

"As we enter into today and the next weeks coming forward, again I want to thank our fans, who have bought more season tickets this year than our record year of 2018. I want to thank all of our donors and investors, who continue their support of our student-athletes, because that's what we're here for. We're here for our student-athletes. And, I want to thank you guys, for what you do in telling our story."

On Her Role In The Investigation Into Misconduct

"Zero. I was told of the investigation after I arrived on campus as an employee of Utah State University. In all of my training with intercollegiate athletics, I realize

an administrator in intercollegiate athletics, the approach should be hands-off. I didn't receive updates, I did not know who was being interviewed, and I was made aware of the findings when they were presented to the university president and me."

On Whether USU President Elizabeth Cantwell Was Involved In The Investigation

"The independent investigation was done by Husch Blackwell, which is public, and you all are aware of that, and they conducted the investigation."

On Her Involvement With Decision-Making After Receiving The Findings

"Correct, I was involved in that, with the president, the board of trustees and with advisement from external council. As you all know, the Department of Justice has lived on this case since 2020 because of crimes within the football program. The Department of Justice has renewed that relationship with Utah State for an additional year, because there has not been an improvement in the culture of the football program. I'm looking very much forward to changing that culture, and to having improvements in our young men on the field, academically, and within the community."

On The Timeline From Receiving The Findings To The July 2 Announcement

"It was a comprehensive review of the findings with local involvement. I do not know the exact date of that... I would have to ask our general counsel. It was extensive. These were hard decisions. These were people who made bad choices and bad decisions – not bad people. But, to continue with the trajectory, and to continue to have Utah State as the state land grant (school), as an institution that many alums, many investors and many donors are proud of, as our football team continues to grow and prosper, to be on the same trajectory is not acceptable."

"We did what was right, we stand by the findings of this independent investigation, and we must move forward. We must get to a point when we are

department. When we are talking about the achievements of the great research that happens on campus. That athletics is not the focal point, but is rather a pride point, as we move forward."

On The Letter Signed By Current And Former Athletes

"That's freedom of speech, to believe in supporting who you want to support as individuals is your independent choice. Those people should have that right. It's the same reason why we're respecting the rights of the individuals involved in these employment actions. We're making sure that we follow university policy and procedure. There's a grievance process to these employment actions, and because of that grievance process, we are respecting those individuals. We want them to have their runway, so we will honor that and we will not put out additional information and additional facts until that time expires and they have their due process, because that's important, and they deserve that."

On If She Has Any Ties To Husch Blackwell

"You can check this with the independent law firm: I have no relationship with Husch Blackwell. I never met the investigators, I've never talked to the investigators, I've not been involved with them in any kind of communication. Zero. As I've said before, I had zero involvement in this independent investigation. It was commissioned before I got here, and to step into that would be ill-advised. That's not who I am as a person, and that's not what I would do as a professional."

On If Any Of The Athletes On The Letter Have Reached Out

"I've had three student-athletes reach out to me, and they re-emphasized the fact, similar to some of their social media posts, that they did not give permission for their names to be on this letter. And I'll just leave it at that. Again, these are young people, we should be focusing on serving young people, not exploiting them or using them to a greater good, or to highlight anyone's profession or career. If they choose to do that, that's great, it's their independent decision and I

am not involved in that whatsoever. But, they came to me, they sought me out, and apologized because they did not give permission for that."

On The Choosing Of Husch Blackwell

"I cannot speculate on policies, procedures or actions that happened before I got here. I can tell you that Husch Blackwell is a national law firm that does a lot of work in intercollegiate athletics departments – at very high levels like the Power Five, and within Group of Five institutions. They're very active in investigations, they're very active in helping to advance institutions and universities with athletics departments and institutional goals. That's what I know of them as a cornerstone of what they do legally, but I can't speculate on why they were chosen."

On Changing The Culture

"It's not just how I want it to be changed, it's how the institution, alumni and community need the change. It is modernizing our athletics department to current social standards and acceptable behaviors, and being in alignment with the values of this community and our institution. This is not what I want, this is for the greater good as one institution, I just want to be clear with that. I am in alignment with that, because that's who I am as a person, that's who I am as an administrator, and that's who I am as a parent. Please realize that young people's lives have forever been changed because of some actions of some people. We cannot simply just cast that aside and turn a blind eye.

"Now, as for the next steps, as we move forward, we'll continue with our education process with our head coaches and our student-athletes. We're having a much more engaged process with our Title IX and Equity office. They are meeting with all of our coaches individually to establish relationships so people realize what they need to do and when they need to do it, and it's a relationship, not just a transaction. No one has any fear or concern, and they make sure that we are doing everything in accordance with our university policies, our state policies, and our federal policies.

"When you are a Title IX reporting official at a university, that is a job that has severe, and specific parameters, and it must be taken seriously. As we move forward, we'll have more signage present for our student-athletes, and we'll have continued enrichment and refreshers, so we aren't just doing it once a year. This will be a continual, year-long process every year, as a coach, as an assistant coach, as a staff member, and as a student-athlete."

On Changing Any Training Materials

"It's really important to not only be applicable and relevant, but to also be responsive. Working with our Title IX office, there is that renewed energy and renewed approach, but I really can't speak on how the training was done, because I'm just coming up on my first anniversary on August 21, so I don't have a good historical reference or a memory bank that I could tell you how it's been adjusted and how we've made it more relevant."

On Expectations For Nate Dreiling

"First and foremost, Nate brings a tremendous toolbox to us. He has made some adjustments with our current staff, elevated some individuals who have shown promise and who have a toolbox and have shown talent up to new responsibilities, and those individuals are excited. They have a new pep in their step and almost feel like, 'Hey, this is mine to own. Why not me, right?' And with that, we've filled in some gaps, and we strengthened some links in the chain with some new additions to our staff."

"Nate knows our expectations. Yes, we would like to be better than .500. But, this is a whole, comprehensive progress. We want to see advancement and progress on the field. We want to see that our student-athletes are prepared. They may not be perfect every time that we scrimmage, or for every down. But, we want to make sure that when they come to the game, they're prepared. They know what their roles are."

"Next, we want to make sure that they're achieving in the classroom. As you all have been recently made aware, we've had a huge academic slide with our football program. Yes, you can look at the transfer portal, but I think you need to go back and look at the DNA who transferred, and why did they transfer? Did they want to transfer, or were they asked to transfer? Our academics need to improve within football. Our academic staff realizes that, and our football staff realizes that. There are new coaches control meetings, and there are efforts made so that we can show some deliberate and intentional progress with that this season.

"And then third, there's the community component. We have to be good citizens in our community. That doesn't mean that one person gets to have a bye. Every single person needs to be a good citizen in our community. I want our student-athletes to be as accountable as our coaching staff. I spoke to several of our football players last night, because I want to be accountable to them. If they have questions, I'm here to answer them for them. We all have to march to the same beat, and if we aren't arm in arm in doing that, then we won't be successful. I have full belief that we have given Nate the tools, and he is responding every single day to reach and rise, and to make us better."

On What It Would Take To Remove Dreiling's Interim Tag

"A really successful season... I think that's good right now. Today is the first day of camp, and I don't want to tell you something that's unrealistic. I think every person, as you work together as a team, figures out the reality and the expectations. How do we work together to achieve that? We'll work together every single day to achieve that, and communication will be key. Trust will be key.

"Having those young men respond and come to the facility, every day won't be easy. It will be hard. But having them respond, having them eager to get better and push each other, to be a brotherhood – love the person to the left and thank the person to the right. That will be a successful team. You've covered sports long enough, you know that a player-led team is the most successful team. We have

they can't wait to get after it. I promise you that, they are ready to go. They may need some fine-tuning, a little bit more work, but they'll be ready."

On Who Is Responsible For Academic Slippage

"It's a partnership. Let me be clear, this is a partnership. Our football student-athletes work with their position coaches, and our head coach, and our football staff every single day. Our academic staff is needed to provide them the resources and the tools they need to be more successful, whether that's a tutor, whether that's an academic advisor, whether that's an academic mentor, we have those capacities to provide to our student-athletes. We need to make sure that we're working arm in arm, step by step and that if we have a student-athlete at risk, we are getting them extra services so that they can be more successful."



Interim Head Coach Nate Dreiling

Opening Statement

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"Thanks for coming, guys. I'm very excited. The kids got back a couple of days ago, we gave them some time off in the last few days of summer to go home and get rejuvenated with their families before we come back and start this journey together. As you know, there have been twists and turns all over the road this summer, but one thing has been constant, and that's our kids' attitudes. We've gotten closer together every single day it seems like, and we're really leaning on each other as we handle things.

"There has been a bunch of adversity, but in that, you can already see what these kids will show and can come out of this once we come out swinging in the first game. Right now, it's just getting back to the little things as we gear up for fall camp, we're making sure that we take care of us. It's not about an opponent, it's just about us getting better, and that's how we're viewing things both on and off the field, we want to get better every day."

On Handling The Adversity Of Anderson's Firing And The Death Of Andre Seldon Jr.

"The adversity has been strong. One thing we did put in place right away is a leadership council to make sure that not just the seniors (are heard), but so are the voices of every class of everybody. My platform is to serve these players, and I don't know how to serve or what they need (without listening to them). It's been a lot of listening to understand from my chair, and making sure I give these guys everything they need to be successful both on and off the field.

"That being so, through those meetings we've come up with great stuff as far as team-building advancement and things like that, but honestly, it's just unsanctioned stuff where we're hanging out together. My office is always open. One thing you guys will find out today as you meet more of these position coaches is that it's a very genuine family here – the kids love being around. They're up here non-stop, I would argue probably more than anybody in the country, not doing football but just doing life stuff and hanging out with the coaches."

On Staffing Adjustments

"It was slow. I talked to a bunch of coaches when I got this job, and the biggest mistake they said you make is when you try to move too fast. You don't know what you don't need, you don't know exactly who the best options are, so I was not rushed at all. The best part about this is that I brought my whole defensive staff with me, so every single one of those guys I've coached with at some point, and I know they're phenomenal human beings and phenomenal teachers. That's why I hired them. It wasn't a huge concern on needing to get someone in right now defensively. I'll continue to call (the defense), so that will look the same as we move forward.

"Offensively, we've been very successful here. Like I told the players, my first order as a head coach is to stay out of the offense's way. How would I give those guys the platform to be successful? That's promoting Kyle Cefalo to offensive coordinator – not only is he one of the best recruiters we have on the team if you look at his position room, but he's also been in the system for 10-plus years and he's essentially the brainchild of that offense. He'll have a very exciting year, and I have all of the confidence in the world with him, as well as elevating Cooper Bassett from offensive line coach to co-offensive coordinator.

"Some additional staff members we brought in, defensively, we got one of my favorite people in the world, Dave Wiemers. He's a senior analyst for the defense, and I actually played for coach Wiemers at Pittsburg State. I went back to Pittsburg State and coached under him, and then I got moved to defensive coordinator while there and he got moved to offensive coordinator. We've been together for a long time. I wanted to make sure for these kids that I get the right people in this building, and that has nothing to do with football and everything to do with character and how they raise young men, and that's how Dave will fit his role for us.

"On offense, we added Troy Morrell. Troy was the head coach at Butler Community College for 10-15 years up until 2014, he won three national

championships, and he went 154-22 as a head coach. One thing I do have a lot of

confidence in and what I've known for a while is managing staff and managing players. I wanted to make sure I wasn't blindsided by any head coaching stuff, it's the fear of not knowing what I don't know. Both of those guys have not only been head coaches, but successful head coaches, so they will help in making sure we stay in check as well as helping with the academics and community involvement."

On What He's Learned So Far About Being A Head Coach

"My agent is connected with a bunch of head coaches, so I've probably annoyed every FBS head coach in the country to make sure I do have the answers. I may not know right now, but I want to get everything before the players ask. There has been a bunch of research since I got the first call from Diana on what to expect, what not to expect, and little things on how to handle certain situations.

"You just aren't used to that in a coordinator role. You go from a position coach in this profession managing 10 kids to a coordinator role when you have 50 and now as a head coach, you have 150. It's a lot more people, but it's also a lot wider deal as opposed to just football. Learning how to handle the operations department and the community involvement has been awesome so far, and that's why bringing in Dave and Troy has been huge, as well as our chief of staff Rachel Phillips, who has been the right-hand woman for Gary Patterson and Jerry Kill in her last two stops before following me here. We have the best people off the field, there's not a doubt in my mind, and they've been tremendous through this."

On Resetting The Program Culture

"I think the first thing is stability, and that's not just winning football games consistently, that's for the fan base, the community and academics. If you just look at Utah State, there have been upswings and downswings, so how can we keep the trajectory going where we want? Ultimately, that's getting the right people and players in here. We have an unbelievable foundation of student-athletes who want to be successful, and I think you'll see with the players we brought in, there are two characteristics: Great football players, and even more

importantly, great men. That's how we'll continue to improve this culture, but also improve our image drastically across the whole state.

"Secondly, it goes to how we recruit. My dad was my high school head coach, so my whole life I've been dealing with high school coaches – half of my friends are high school coaches. That will be our lifeline in recruiting, and that starts with the state. In the state of Utah, we had 48 guys go to Division I football programs last year. That number is anywhere from 25 to 45 on average. There's no reason we shouldn't have 10-15 players (from Utah) every single year, and if we don't get guys because maybe they get bigger offers, we get them when they come back home. It's those type of people who we know have the values that we want, not just on the football field but as people who the community will be proud of."

On Honoring Andre Seldon Jr.

"I wish you guys could have been around him. Andre is one of my favorite people ever. I won't even talk about what kind of player he was, but he's a kid who was always smiling, always loving and I said at the ceremony we had here on the field for his family last Thursday, every single conversation between me and Andre started with one of us making fun of each other and every single conversation ended with a hug. That's the type of relationship I had with him, and the type of relationship we hope to have with every one of these kids in the building. He's meant so much to me.

"That being said, me and three other coaches are hopping on a jet right after this and flying to his funeral back in Detroit tomorrow, so we had to adjust practice and meetings, practice got moved to tomorrow night so we can make it back in time. Fortunately, one of our donors helped us out on that. We'll continue to honor him, you'll see a bunch of patches and different stuff that the coaches are wearing throughout the season."

On Recruiting Troy Morrell

"I have worked my rear end off, not that he didn't want to get back in (to

coaching), but he was in an unbelievable situation at his current job. He was

helping to run a multi-million dollar organization out of Boston and being very successful outside of the football world, but I could tell with my first phone call to him that he was our guy for sure, and that we had a good chance. The reason he got out of football was to spend more time with his family because he was missing too many games, and now that his kids are grown and not involved in college or high school athletics, he has more time on his hands and he's been itching to get back in.

"We had three or four conversations and I made sure that I was going to do whatever I could to get him in the building. He's about as good as it gets, and I'm not just talking about winning football games, but as far as developing young men. I called him four days ago before he took the job, and he was teaching a leadership course to his entire staff at his last job. He does way more than win football games, he develops people, and that's what we need more of."

On Being The Youngest FBS Head Coach

"I know it makes my mom feel proud. If you look at her Facebook page, you'll see Utah State Aggies all over. She has a fan club for Western Kansas Utah State Aggies fans. I hope she's not watching, she's over the top, but they're awfully proud and that means a lot. I obviously don't care too much about it, I just need to make sure that doesn't mean I'm not poised to be successful for these players."

On Incorporating New Players Into The Team

"How do we get the turnaround so fast and get these players on it is the most important question. That's ongoing. The majority of them have been here this summer, and that's what Diana was talking about, Paul Jackson is absolutely phenomenal with how he develops these kids and with creating a competitive environment. We split guys into teams, so now they aren't just hanging around with the same positions, we're getting them around other people.

"The most talented team doesn't always win, it's the team that will fight the hardest for one another, and that's what summertime is for and what Paul

Jackson does best. Ultimately, we'll have so many things for fall camp because

there have been some new additions in these past couple of weeks, getting these kids around and more familiar not just position-wise, but knowing every single kid in the room."

On Gabe Peterson And Torren Union

"I'll start with Gabe Peterson. I recruited Gabe and I was his only offer at FCS Southeast Missouri State, then I took the job at New Mexico State and I was his only offer in the FBS. He's a Kansas kid, he actually played my dad's school and my dad called after the game and told me I had to offer him. I've known him and his family for a long time. He's what Aggie Nation wants, he's someone who is extremely tough, he's a phenomenal student, and he'll walk around with a smile and make everyone proud. He's a player who started as a true freshman at New Mexico State and had an unbelievable sophomore campaign, he left New Mexico State after we all did, and luckily I was fortunate enough to get him here not too long ago. He'll be a great addition to help with the depth in that outside linebacker room.

"Torren, if you started talking with him, you'll have a hard time walking away because he'll talk his jaw off, and you'll love everything he says. He's so great for the locker room because of how he lightens the mood, he always has a huge smile on his face. Athletically, he'll play that nickel position for us, which is one of the hardest spots in all of football to play – you have to fit the run, you have to cover someone man-to-man, and you have to know basically every technique in the book. Now, both of those guys will have to come in and earn their spots. I didn't promise them anything. At worst, they'll provide depth and make sure that the locker room is where we want it to be."

On Gabriel Iniguez Jr. And Jordan Vincent

"First off, if I brought them from New Mexico State, that means their character is unbelievable. Those guys have been here for six months, and both of them were top 10 in the captain voting. Not that we didn't have unbelievable leadership here, both those guys just carried themselves in a different way.

"Jordan was an all-conference safety for us at New Mexico State, he's one of the toughest kids I've ever been around. He's an awesome human being who will also help that safety room. That room is very top-heavy with returners and older players and then a bunch of young guys, and we need to make sure that they can go in, which is where he can help a lot.

"Gabriel may look very intimidating when you stare at him, but he's a big teddy bear, don't be scared of that guy. He's phenomenal. He was the heart and soul of New Mexico State, him and Andre both were, and one thing about him is that he'll outwork whoever it is. That's what I want, tough kids who are hard-working and have the same core values that I believe in and that I want this program to represent, and that's what all of those New Mexico State guys will have to do."

On What He'd Consider A Successful Season

"On a personal level, if it's six months from now, I'm looking back and I can honestly tell myself that I gave these kids everything I could for them to be successful, that I served them how I want to serve them, and got this program and its culture at the top level in all of college football, that will be a success. On the field, there's no reason we shouldn't be competing for a Mountain West championship.

"I was brought in to help fix the defense, and if (Utah State) had a great defense last year, it probably would have made a run for the Mountain West championship. Offensively, I think they finished 19th in the country last year in total offense, and there's no reason that shouldn't be top 10 with who we have, and with the quarterback we have back there in Spencer.

"Defensively, we brought this staff in and got a couple of players, but the foundation is here with the kids, and they're all buying in. One thing we do on defense is talk about how it's not what you do, but how you do it. From my expertise, we spend a lot of time on giving these players the tools to be successful. We'll fix the defense, there's not a doubt in my mind; the offense will

roll like it always has; and we'll get back to competing for Mountain West championships."

On The Split Between Fixing Defensive Problems And Installing A New System

"One of the main reasons I took this job is that it was very similar to my job at New Mexico State. When I got to New Mexico State, they were ranked 127th the year before, and one thing that was similar about this place is that they were ranked in the upper 100s. I knew for sure that if you've been that bad, you will soak up information and knowledge. You want to be a sponge, because two things happen. One, you get tired of people telling you how bad you are, and two, you have a huge chip on your shoulder for the exact same reason. As soon as I walked in the room, they were all ears and have been unbelievable.

"They had plenty of talent last year, we just have to make sure we spend the time to give the kids tools to be successful and get some confidence rolling. There's no reason that we shouldn't be the best or one of the best defenses in the Mountain West, and that's our goal. We aren't there yet, and I let the kids know exactly where we stand when I meet with them, but we are getting closer and making huge strides. Fall camp will be fun. One thing you'll see with this defense is that we'll have unbelievable depth, and you have to. If our offense is trying to score 60 points to win the game, you better have two sets of starters, and that's why fall camp will be fun for building that depth."

On The Depth At Running Back

"It's good. You have Rahsul (Faison) coming back after close to 900 yards (rushing) or so and you have Robert Briggs Jr. Those two will be the one-two punch that we have, as well as a couple of JUCO kids. With that offense, we're more of a one-back system that goes fast, so they don't sub (a ton), but we do need two tailbacks, and we feel like with those two guys, both of them can take it the distance on any play. Not to mention, we have a wide receiver in Jalen Royals, and I keep talking about Spencer (Petrus), but the spring he had at quarterback was unbelievable. This offense was successful last year, and he'll blow the roof

off this thing."

On If He's Expecting Any More Transfers Out Of The Program

"One thing that's been awesome is, this is college football and you can go wherever you want, (and we're) seeing how much they love it here. Some people at media days thought it would be a mass exodus, everyone would be gone and we can't replace them with anybody, but I think it's a testament to how we treat these players.

"They don't want to go. We've had guys who received offers and money offers through NIL, all over the country, and they've consistently turned it down because of how they're treated here and how they know they'll be developed on the field, and even more so off the field. I think it's a testament to this coaching staff keeping this thing in place. Will we lose another guy? I don't know about hypotheticals, but I do know that the players who are here are extremely happy and ready to work."

On Knowing When A Team Is Ready

"I tell them all the time, if I don't have to say anything at practice, we're there. People make mistakes, but if I can have a senior or a starter fix that player before I can, then we're there. If I'm still having to correct it because those guys aren't helping the people below them, then we're not building the depth we need. As soon as you don't hear me talking at practice, you know we're pretty close."

On The Linebackers

"That's the biggest question mark on paper. Let's talk about who we have coming back first. We have big Max (Alford), he tore his ACL in the Iowa game, but he's way ahead of schedule and he'll be practicing here in the next couple of days coming off that knee injury. We feel like he should be one of the best linebackers in the Mountain West. On top of that, you have Bronson (Olevao), Cole Joyce, Logan Pili – a bunch of guys who have played a bunch of snaps, maybe not in that starting role, but in the reserve role in building depth.

"And then with the recruits coming in, we do have some big additions. Clyde Washington coming from Purdue, he played 350 snaps last year in the Big Ten, and they were meaningful snaps. He started at SAM linebacker for them. He wanted a bigger role, I have a great relationship with (Purdue DC) Kevin Kane. and he said, 'You're absolutely crazy if you don't take this guy.' He's been phenomenal so far.

"We also have Jon Ross Maye, who just like me was at a Division II school and was one of the best DII linebackers in the country last year, filling up the stat sheet. He's been phenomenal this summer, as well as John Miller coming over from Oregon State. Those are three linebackers who have all played a bunch of football and have a bunch of production, but more importantly, they're phenomenal leaders and very smart kids.

"At linebacker, I was slower than all of you guys in here, but I ended up making a bunch of tackles not because I was fast or athletic, but because I was a smart player. That's what we brought in, and that's what coach Bobby McMillen develops I think better than anybody else in the country, the football IQ in that room. It's a huge question mark right now, but it will be a shining point by the end of the season."

On The Size Of The Lines

"We needed to be longer. You don't have to be tall, necessarily, but you do have to have long arms. It's like when you put your hand on your little nephew so he can't punch you. We're trying to get that mindset and develop what our prototype players look like, and stay true to that model. Now, I'm not saying we won't take a short player, but we won't have a room full of exceptions. That's one thing we try to stay true on, and length is a huge thing for us moving forward."

On The Transition From Smaller Schools To The MWC

"The first thing I do is stay out of their way. They know they won't be successful

That's where our homework comes in. If you look at our portal success rate at New Mexico State, if we brought a kid in, he was going to be successful because of our background checks.

"One, we'll bring in the hardest workers. You can be talented, but if you aren't a hard worker, you won't survive here. That's not the DNA (of the program), and that's not the product we want to put on the field for this community. So, I let those guys outwork people, I let them grow their voice, and then we start molding them. That's the order.

"Those guys know when they come in, and I tell them this all the time when recruiting them, if someone tells you that you'll go be a starter, you should run away fast, because how many people is he telling that to? All I've told every single one of those guys is that we'll develop them on and off the field better than anybody in the country, and I truly believe that. But, they still have to earn it. If we bring a guy in, you'll know he's a very hard-working human being, and they'll earn the right (to play), but we're bringing them in for a reason to be successful as well."

On His Relationship With Blake Anderson

"Blake has been nothing but phenomenal. One of the reasons I took this job, as I'm sure you guys know, my wife was going through breast cancer last January when I was on the job market looking around. Obviously, with Blake's past, I knew he would be very forgiving in letting me miss stuff that I'd have to miss to be there for my wife. He's been phenomenal for me, those six months were very good for me and Lex, and he allowed a lot of stuff for me to be away. I'm very appreciative of him, but at the same time, our kids know that you can't know the twists and turns of life, but tough people rise to the top, so we have to lean on each other to make a run at this."

On The Starting Quarterback Battle

"Spencer is quarterback one. I truly believe that he's one of the best-throwing

that and say that as well. I do love that whole quarterback room. I met with every quarterback and offensive player, but I told the quarterbacks the same thing, I believe you win football games with a great defense and a tough quarterback.

"Whether you're talking about Bryson (Barnes) or CJ (Tiller), all of those guys, the team wants to play for, wants to work for, and will do anything for. If you have that case, whether it's the first quarterback or the third quarterback, you have the chance to be successful. That's why that quarterback room will be fun, even moving forward into the following years. You'll have a tough guy at the reins, and that's what I'm so excited about."

On Reducing Penalties

"The biggest thing for me is what the penalties are. Are these unsportsmanlike fouls? That comes down to controlling your emotions. If you can't control your emotions, you can't control anything. It's important that how we practice and how we prepare. We put a lot of strain on our guys so that when it comes to gameday, life is easy. If we have to do extra stuff during the game that we couldn't handle in practice, emotionally or physically, that's when people get out of line and that's when that stuff shows.

"Ultimately, it was funny talking with and listening to our players, the one thing they wanted to improve on was that right there, discipline, self-discipline and team discipline. We put some things in place as soon as I took the job over to help encourage people to make sure they're where they need to be on time, but it has to be the little things. If we're on the clock and you're not early, there have to be consequences. You have to build it from the inside out. If not, you just can't be disciplined on gameday.

"We're helping to develop that at a very fast rate, because if you look at some of the best teams in the country, they're almost always penalty-free. The ones I can't stand are personal fouls and pre-snap. If you accidentally hold someone, cool. That's football, you'll get through that, but we'll do a huge job as far as limiting pre-snap and personal fouls."

On Playing Situational Defense

"For me, it goes right to football IQ. We have a huge meeting every single day on defense. All of my position coaches ask something, whether it's block distraction, turnovers, tackling or pursuit, we speak on everything, and then I speak on football IQ. What we try to do and how we accelerate winning on our defense is that if one guy makes a mistake, you will not see that mistake again, and we handle it for the whole team. If it's a defensive tackle jumping offsides on third-and-2, nobody else needs to learn that lesson.

"We capitalize with our teachers, but that goes back to having players who want to listen and understand, as well. Teams lose more football games than they win. How do we make sure that when the time gets big, our players know how to handle that situation, they're prepared, and we're staying ahead of the chains? That comes with a lot of hours in this room right here."

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